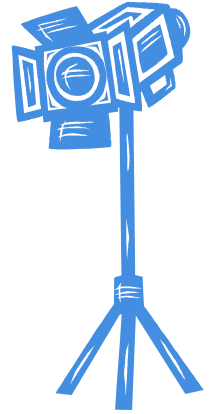


THE SENATE SPOTLIGHT

Volume 1, Issue 4

Georgia State Senate

December 2005



Senate Leadership dedicates *Fallen Troopers Memorial Highway*

*President Pro Tem Johnson
and Majority Leader
Williams honor fallen heroes*

Leaders of the Georgia State Senate, House of Representatives and several Georgia state troopers gathered on Thursday, November 17, 2005, at Holton's Seafood Restaurant in Midway to honor the memory of fallen State Troopers. The dedication of a stretch of U.S. Interstate 95 (between exits 67 and 76), as the *Fallen Troopers Memorial*



Highway, pays homage to the lives of fallen Georgia state troopers. The overpass at exit 70 also was named the *Trooper Ronnie O'Neal Overpass*.

"It is only appropriate that we memorialize those who have lost their lives in the service of protecting Georgia and her citizens and guests," said Senate President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson, author of Senate Resolution 304, which designates the highway and overpass.



Passed during the 2005 legislative session, Senate Resolution 304 authorizes the Georgia Department of Transportation to erect and maintain appropriate signage dedicating the Fallen Troopers Memorial Highway and the Trooper Ronnie O'Neal Overpass. Trooper O'Neal was tragically killed in the line of duty on January 10, 1984, while pursuing a fleeing vehicle on I-95.

House Public Safety Committee Chairman Burke Day was on hand to present the O'Neal family with a letter from Governor Sonny

Perdue marking the occasion. Col. Bill Hitchins, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety, also was present to address the family and approximately 75 state troopers and local sheriffs in attendance.



"We owe a great debt of gratitude to Trooper O'Neal and the other 24 troopers who have lost their lives in the line of duty for making the ultimate sacrifice to protect the lives of Georgia's citizens," said Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams. "This stretch of highway will serve as a reminder to all those who drive through of the brave men and women who put their lives on the line every day for their protection."

Member of Trooper Ronnie O'Neil's family, including his wife Meryl, daughters Dawn and Beverly, and grandchildren Brooke, Jennifer and Wesley, were also on hand for the unveiling of the *Fallen Troopers Memorial Highway* sign and the road dedication.

2006 Session on the horizon



On Thursday, December 1, 2005, Senators Tim Golden, Doug Stoner and Sam Zamarripa held a press conference to introduce their prefiled bill, *The Georgia Higher Education Protection Act*, to the public. The legislation aims to codify into law the existing admissions policies and procedures set by the state Board of Regents.

"Children should not be penalized for the sins of their parents," said Sen. Golden, expressing the intent of his legislation. "We should be interested in allowing the Board of Regents to be autonomous, because the Board should be setting the policies and standards for the University system."

Sens. Golden and Zamarripa also used the opportunity to unveil a proposed resolution that would urge the U.S. Congress to act on immigration, adding that the State should then comply with the Federal law.



President Pro Tem Eric Johnson responded to the action by stating, "If an 18-year-old is in this country illegally, he or she is old enough to know that entering our University System can be done legally through an educational visa. Illegal immigration is an issue that affects every taxpayer in Georgia, and we need to do something about it." Sen. Johnson added, "Sen. Chip Rogers introduced good legislation last year that will help address Georgia's problems with illegal immigrants, and I will work with him to perfect this legislation for passage during the 2006 session."

The issue of immigration, along with other important issues such as eminent domain, juvenile code and ethics in government, is sure to come up during the 2006 legislative session, which begins January 9, 2006.

Senators Jeff Mullis and Don Thomas receive Legislative Service Awards

ACCG recognizes Senators for distinguished leadership



Last month, State Senators Jeff Mullis and Don Thomas were presented with 2005 Legislative Service Awards by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). The awards were presented during the ACCG 1st district meeting at the Bentwater Activity Center in Acworth. Legislative Service Awards are given annually to lawmakers who have shown distinguished leadership and interest in working with county governments for the benefit of Georgia citizens.

Sen. Mullis received the Service Award for his efforts to fight the sale and manufacture of methamphetamine in Georgia. Sen. Mullis recognized the impact of methamphetamine (or “meth”) manufactured in dangerous home labs on the well being of his north Georgia constituency. Sen. Mullis worked closely with Representative Jay Neal on House Bill 216, which begins to address the problem by restricting the sale of cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine throughout the State.

Sen. Don Thomas received his Service Award for sponsoring Senate Bill 90, known as the “Georgia Smokefree Air Act of 2005,” which prohibits smoking in most enclosed public places that allow minors. Sen. Thomas has worked tirelessly over the past several legislative sessions to garner support for a statewide smoking ban. The Georgia Smokefree Air Act finally went into effect on July 1, 2005.

“These legislators have consistently demonstrated their concern for the well-being of all of Georgia’s citizens,” noted Jerry Griffin, ACCG Executive Director. ACCG Director Griffin and ACCG President Billy Coker were on hand to present the awards to the Senators. Senators Preston Smith and Ross Tolleson have also received Legislative Service Awards in 2005.



Senate staff celebrates the Holidays!



After a very busy 2005 that included a productive legislative session and the recent special session, the staff of the Georgia State Senate took some time to relax and to celebrate the upcoming holidays on Wednesday, December 7. This year’s Potluck Holiday Luncheon was held in the State Capitol, and featured a myriad of delicious dishes. Secretary of the Senate Frank Eldridge provided Honey Baked ham and turkey for the event. Senate staffers enjoyed an afternoon complete with ham, turkey, macaroni-n-cheese, cheese grits, sweet potato soufflé, green beans and many other dishes.

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Spotlight on... Senate Study Committees



Senators Steen Miles, Bill Hamrick, Joseph Carter and Brian Kemp (pictured left to right) hear testimony at a recent meeting in Douglasville, GA.

SECURITY FOR STATE AND COUNTY BUILDINGS STUDY COMMITTEE

In the wake of the March 11, 2005, incident at the Fulton County Courthouse in downtown Atlanta, the Senate has formed a Study Committee to look at security for state and county buildings throughout Georgia. The Security for State and County Buildings Study Committee met on December 8, 2005, at the Douglas County Courthouse to hear testimony from county officials, as well as a representative of Motorola Communications. This was the final meeting of the Study Committee, where it was determined that a report would be created. The Committee is not expected to present legislation.

ATLANTA COUNTY/MILTON COUNTY STUDY COMMITTEE

Chaired by Senators Dan Moody and Sam Zamarripa, the Senate Atlanta County and Milton County Study Committee is examining the future of Fulton County and whether it should be separated into two counties, consolidated into one city/county government such as Athens-Clarke County, become fully incorporated or remain as it exists today. The Committee met for the last time on December 6, and it was determined that a Committee report will be created.

HOME HEATING FUELS STUDY COMMITTEE

The Home Heating Fuels Study Committee, chaired by Sen. Mitch Seabaugh, has concluded its hearings, and will provide a report to the Senate detailing its findings. It is not expected to present legislation.

JASPER PORT STUDY COMMITTEE

The Jasper Port Study Committee is primarily focused on the environmental impact of the Jasper Port. Members of the Study Committee toured the proposed site of the port on November 15. On November 16, the Study Committee held its first only meeting. A Study Committee report is pending.

JOINT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

The Joint Agricultural Education Study Committee was created to study and develop strategies for teaching agriculture in K-12 schools in Georgia. The Committee last met on December 14, in Macon. A report is pending; however, there will be no recommended legislation from this Study Committee.

JOINT COASTAL GEORGIA SOUND SCIENCE INITIATIVE STUDY COMMITTEE

The Joint Coastal Georgia Sound Science Initiative Study Committee met twice to examine the results of the Sound Science Initiative; a seven-year, \$17 million study addressing concerns that pumping of groundwater in the region is allowing saltwater to seep into the Upper Floridian drinking water aquifer. The Committee met again on November 21, and a report will be issued.

JOINT EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES STUDY COMMITTEE

The Joint House and Senate Emerging Technologies Study Committee met on Thursday, November 17, to hear the report and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, which was presented by Facilitator Joe Bankoff. The Study Committee plans met again this month to consider the proposed legislation drafted by the Advisory Committee. It is expected that legislation will be approved by this Study Committee.

JOINT FUTURE OF GEORGIA FORESTRY STUDY COMMITTEE

The Joint Future of Forestry Study Committee was created to prepare a comprehensive plan for Georgia to sustain and expand the benefits of its forest lands and forest products industries. The Committee has now concluded its meetings, and a final report will be issued.

JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE on LIQUID NATURAL GAS

The LNG Study Committee met on November 28, to hear the report of the Advisory Committee. The Committee considered information for a resolution concerning an inventory and exploration for offshore drilling. The Committee will continue to meet with members of the Advisory Committee.

PUBLIC DEFENDERS LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT STUDY COMMITTEE

The Oversight Committee met on Tuesday, December 13, for its final meeting of the year. The Public Defenders Standards Council presented their standards for final determination of fiscal impact. The Committee report is pending.

COMMISSION on the GEORGIA HEALTH INSURANCE RISK POOL

Chaired by Richard S. Novack, the Commission on the Georgia Health Insurance Risk Pool is studying the feasibility of establishing an insurance pool for individuals with high-risk health conditions such as AIDS, diabetes and cancer. The Commission met again on November 18, and determined that an interim report and legislation establishing a Health Insurance High Risk Pool will be introduced during the 2006 session.

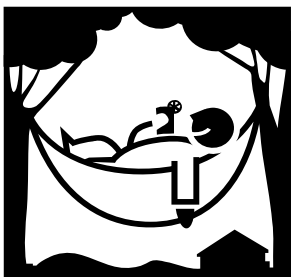
Senate Budget's Spotlight on...Monthly Numbers



The revenue collected by the Department of Revenue for November 2005 was \$1.21 billion. This is an increase of 2 percent when compared to the revenue collected in November 2004 (\$1.18 billion).

For the first five months of the 2005 state fiscal year, state revenues were \$5.9 billion and for the same period of the 2006 fiscal year, revenues were \$6.4 billion, an 8 percent increase.

Most of the effect of the September sales tax suspension on gasoline was recognized in the October 2005 numbers, but there was some residual loss of revenue in the November numbers. That effect plus income tax refunds to several corporations account for November's 2 percent increase (as compared to November 2004).



Congratulations!!!

The Georgia State Senate extends its congratulations and best wishes to Senate secretary Linda Sammons on her retirement at the end of 2005. Linda has worked for the State Senate for 25 years, and has assisted many Senators in their everyday business during her tenure. Upon her retirement, she plans to spend time relaxing, playing with her grandchildren and enjoying hobbies and personal interests. We truly wish her all the best!

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The Senate Spotlight on...Jennifer Wolford



What is your current job and/or assignments?

I am the Deputy Director of the Senate Budget and Evaluation Office, and I have worked for the Senate since 2003. My primary responsibility is to facilitate our staff to assist the Senate in developing the budget every year. I handle all of the internal operations of the office, and act as a back-up to the Director of SBEO whenever necessary.

How did you end up at the General Assembly?

A friend of mine is a fellow University of Georgia football season ticket holder. At a Bulldog football game, she told me about the position, and I submitted for the job. The rest is history! Prior to coming to the Senate, I worked for seven years at a technology company in Alpharetta as a financial officer. Before I moved to Atlanta, I worked in accounting at a hardwood lumber mill in Milledgeville, GA.

We know you have a great family – tell us about them!

I met my husband Randy Wolford at UGA, where he played football, and we've been married for 13 years. Randy teaches pre-engineering/drafting at South Forsyth High School, and he's also the Department Chair for Career and Technology. We have a three-year-old daughter named Makenzy Leigh, and a ten-year-old yellow lab named Stegeman (after Stegeman Coliseum in Athens, GA).

What is something you would like to accomplish in the next 10 years?

Professionally, I would like to work with the Senate Budget and Evaluation Office to continue to produce the state budget in a fully automated, electronic fashion. We now are using databases and other electronic functions to change and to streamline the way we do the budget. Most of all, I want to help the Senators and help Georgia continually progress with regard to the state budget, and the way we care for our citizens.

Tell me a little about your background. Birthplace, brothers and sisters, etc.

I grew up on one of the state's largest dairy farms in Eatonton, GA, which is in Putnam County. I am the youngest of three girls. My father, Winford Little, is a dairy farmer, and my mom, Janie Little, is a 2nd grade teacher at Putnam County Elementary School. My mother also works on the dairy. I have two older sisters – Windee Little and Meredith Crouch. Windee is the media specialist at Putnam County High School, and Meredith is a kindergarten teacher at Putnam County Elementary School. I now live in Alpharetta, GA, and I am a member of the North Point Community Church.

We're starting to gather that you are a big UGA fan – tell us about that.

I am a huge Georgia football fan – Go Dawgs! My husband Randy was a defensive lineman for Georgia. I've only missed one Georgia home football game in 28 years, and that was because I was in labor with my daughter and my husband wouldn't let me go. I am actually a big fan of all UGA sports, not just football, and I even worked for the UGA women's basketball team during college. I enjoy watching sports at all levels – high school, college and the pros. I also enjoy playing golf and skiing.

The General Assembly can be an exciting place to work. What are some of the aspects of your position that you enjoy the most?

One of the aspects of my job that I enjoy immensely is dealing directly with the day-to-day issues that face all of Georgia's citizens. I find government and politics very interesting, and by working for the General Assembly I have become more of a participant in government at every level. Also, the budget we create in our office impacts all Georgia's citizens, and it is a privilege for me to be able to help so many people in this State each year.

The Senate Spotlight . . . December Birthdays



HAPPY BIRTHDAY to . . .



Senator Gloria Butler
Senator Greg Goggans
Senator Judson Hill
Senator Jeff Mullis
Senator Bill Stephens
Senator Regina Thomas
Senator Curt Thompson
Senator Steve Thompson
Majority Leader Tommie Williams
Senator Sam Zamarripa
Heather DiNapoli- Senate Budget
Susan Gordon- Legislative Counsel
Cheree Harper- Secretary of Senate's office
Judy Hill- Fiscal Office
Lillian Johnson- Senate Secretary
Jachque' Ratliff- Senate Secretary

December 25th
December 5th
December 17th
December 27th
December 7th
December 5th
December 15th
December 22nd
December 4th
December 17th
December 10th
December 31st
December 14th
December 24th
December 2nd
December 2nd



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

The Senate Information Office would like to take this opportunity to wish all Senators and Senate staff a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! We hope everyone will safely enjoy this wonderful time of the year!

The Senate Spotlight is a product of the Senate Information Office. If you have a suggestion or a person you would like to be considered for the Senate Spotlight on Employees, please contact us at 404.656.0028.